

Internationalizing the Music Course: MUSC 2022 Ear Training and Sight Singing Through an International Lens

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Abstract

This paper reports on the process by which the curriculum for the 16-week, one semester course, MUSC 2022, Ear Training and Sight Singing, was internationalized. Since the world is increasingly becoming a global village, I wanted students to expand their awareness of other countries, along with the music and history of those countries, through their musical skills and knowledge in this new course that I created. The purpose of internationalizing this course is that students will appreciate music from a global perspective by comparing and contrasting rhythms, scales, and melodies from other countries. I used the Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Japanese national anthems; Brazilian dance rhythms; and Japanese pentatonic scales to illustrate to students the differences in the sound of music and specific rhythms, but also to introduce each country's traditions, culture, and history. Preparation for this course involved research on the Internet to select appropriate anthems and dance rhythms, transposing anthems into a singable lower key, and avoiding duplication of the similar courses, Ethnic Music or World Music.

Keywords: intercultural curriculum; cross-cultural studies; internationalized education

Music students who learn the music of foreign composers might not notice that they are subconsciously becoming internationalized in the process of playing and singing in foreign languages. For example, studying German composer Ludwig van Beethoven and Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, two of the most well-known names in music; present naturally derived exposure to the internationalism of music. During the instructional process of learning music, the student is presented with a wealth of knowledge about individual composers and concepts of musicality. Although these particular aspects of learning music are crucially important

and should be a major (instructional) focus, generally it is the professor's objective that the student's musical experience be heightened through the study of international music and their origins. This reasoning led to the curriculum for MUSC 2022 being revised with a single important premise: to form a deliberate connection between course materials and the countries from which they originated.

The general and traditional goal of ear training is literally "to train the ear" to be able to analyze music aurally. Ear training at most institutions is divided into two to four levels. At ASU the same instructional books are used at all levels in the ear training courses, which are offered in sequence for four semesters, with minor variations. Unfortunately, ear training courses tend to focus only on listening to the melody and harmony and then dictating or singing them. A more in-depth and comprehensive approach to the music's history, the composer's country, and the context of the time in which the composer lived are often omitted for one reason or another. My ear training class was not an exception, and it was a challenge for me was to research and adopt new course materials to avoid the pitfalls of these traditional methods.

Objectives and Outcomes focused on Internationalization

An ear training and sight singing course is a required course in all university-level music curricula. It prepares the student for professional success in a music career, as either an educator or performer, by developing the knowledge and skills associated with professional music performance and music education. This course is designed to allow student: 1. to aurally identify and write intervals and scales, 2. to aurally analyze the chord structures of harmony, 3. to hear and write dictated melodies, 4. to hear and write dictated rhythms, and 5. to become proficient in sight singing. Through careful analysis of international music (e.g., exotic rhythms, modes, and national anthems), students will be able to gain insight into the musical approaches of various cultures and develop a greater appreciation of music from around the world. They will acquire fluency in singing the national anthems of various countries, familiarity with rhythms from around the world, and familiarity with pentatonic scales. Students will be able to apply these abilities to the acquisition of international and intercultural knowledge,

and incorporate the skills from multicultural experiences into their own performances.

The main objective of this course was to use three elements of music—melody, rhythm, and harmony—as focal points to introduce students to the music of other cultures. Through comparing and contrasting these elements across different styles, and by learning about historical and cultural influences, students approached music from a broader, more international perspective. This exposure to new and unfamiliar sounds and patterns gave students a fresh perspective and allowed them to further develop their musicality and understanding of music.

Course Content and Method

Brazilian rhythms, the Japanese pentatonic scales, and the national anthems of Nigeria, Ghana, and Japan were chosen as content materials to internationalize this course. The websites of the Nigerian and Ghanaian governments were useful for learning about these countries. The tunes of the national anthems of these countries were obtained by listening to video performances and through musical scores found on the Internet. Brazilian dance rhythms were chosen from *Brazilian Rhythms for Drumset* (Fonseca & Weiner, 1991). The website of the Japan Arts Council, as well as video performances of Japanese music, was used to obtain source materials for Japanese pentatonic scales.

Brazilian Rhythms

Brazilian music emphasizes rhythm more than the music of many countries. These Brazilian rhythms originate from Africa and are all heard in the music to which Brazilians dance. Five patterns of Brazilian rhythms with the same meter (the length of one measure) were introduced to the students. Then, each pattern was drummed by hand by one or two students. Since the five rhythms are the same meter, the beat of each measure matches, and students were able to drum at the same time, even if the patterns were different. The different rhythmic instruments and hand-made tools, such as a pair of maracas and a tin and drumstick, were used by each student to drum each pattern. So that they could feel the rhythms with their whole bodies, all the students stood up and drummed the rhythm while dancing.

Japanese Pentatonic Scales

Pentatonic scales are not only heard in Japanese music, but also in music from all Asian countries. The students wrote down the five different Japanese pentatonic scales on staff lines. Next, each scale was sung in Solfège (do, re, mi). Some Japanese songs were introduced to give the students a feel for the pentatonic scales. Because there are only five notes, unlike the seven notes found in the common scales of Western music, the pentatonic tunes sound as if they are in an unknown key: not major and not minor. The students were assigned to compose their own short eight-measure compositions using one of the five Japanese pentatonic scales. Since the students are music majors, writing their own short compositions on staff lines was easy for them. However, singing these in tune was quite challenging because the tunes are different than the tunes in seven note scales with which they are familiar.

National Anthems

National anthems were chosen as materials for this project because their embodiment of distinct styles is characteristic to each country. Considerations in selecting these anthems included the songs' lengths and whether their melodic and rhythmic elements corresponded to topics covered in class.

The Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Japanese national anthems were chosen for this project. In comparing these three countries' national anthems, the melodies of the Nigerian and Ghanaian national anthems are long, memorable, and natural. On the other hand, the Japanese melody is simple and short, because it derives from the Japanese pentatonic scale. First, these three countries' national anthems were dictated correctly by the students on staff lines. Then after practicing these melodies by singing them in Solfège, the students were introduced to the songs' lyrics.

Nigeria's National Anthem: *Arise, O compatriots*¹

Arise, O compatriots
Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might

One nation bound in freedom
Peace and unity.

Ghana's National Anthem: *God Bless Our Homeland Ghana*

God bless our homeland Ghana
And make our nation great and strong
Bold to defend forever
The cause of Freedom and of Right
Fill our hearts with true humility
Make us cherish fearless honesty
And help us to resist oppressors' rule
With all our will and might for evermore.

*The Nigerian anthem's second stanza and the Ghanaian anthem's second and third stanzas have been omitted here.

Japanese National Anthem, *Kimi ga yo*

Ki mi gayo wa,	A thousand years of happy life be thine!
Chiyo ni yachiyo nil,	Live on, my Lord, till what are pebbles
Sazareishi no,	now,
Iwao to narite	By age united, to great rocks shall grow,
Koke no musumade.	Whose venerable sides the moss doth line.

English Translation by Basil H. Chamberlain
(1850-1935)

From the lyrics of the Nigerian and Ghanaian national anthems, students learned about the historical hardships of these two countries and their determination to advance their nations for future generations. In contrast, the lyrics of the Japanese anthem praise the Emperor through metaphor. To provide context for this reading, the course introduced students to the history of the Japanese Emperor as the national symbol, as well as to the historical circumstances surrounding the Imperial family. The students were assigned to sing these three countries' national anthems and to write a poem that fit the melody of the Japanese national anthem: one syllable per note.

Guest Speakers with International Backgrounds

The best part of this project was that the class had two guest speakers: Dr. Nneka Osakwe (Director of Global Programs) and Dr. Uzoma Okafor (Professor of Forensic Science), who are both from Nigeria.

Nowadays, people can easily use the Internet and other technological tools to shorten the distance between countries. However, it is difficult to know a country's circumstances and culture without hearing from its people. The speakers presented information about the people, cultures, languages, education, school system, and family system of Nigeria. The two guests' presentations caught the students' interest. The students asked several questions, especially regarding Nigeria having so many languages, over 500, and how Nigerian residents coped with communicating with one another. With the guests, the students sang Nigeria's national anthem, which they had learned before the guests came. After class, the guest speakers and all the students enjoyed a traditional Japanese home-cooked meal, curry rice, which I prepared. This forum was an opportunity to introduce one of the Japanese dishes, its ingredients and preparation. While eating the meal, the guest speakers and students enjoyed talking about Nigeria's culture and comparing it with the culture of the U.S. In the long run, the students learned about Nigeria, Ghana, Japan, and they compared these countries with the U.S.

General Class Assessment and Performance

Class performances were conducted over the span of seven class sessions. Students sang Nigerian and Ghanaian national anthems by memory for an in-class exam. Other assignments, as noted above, included writing a poem to the tune of the Japanese national anthem and creating an original short composition using the Japanese pentatonic scales. (Rubric and Assessment for the exam and assignments are attached as Appendix A)

In their comments, students stated that the class was engaging, and they overwhelmingly requested that the same sort of class performance be carried out in MUSC 2022 in the future. Some students also expressed high interest in learning more about Africa, an unsurprising request, as Albany State University is part of Historically Black Colleges and Universities family.

Challenges in Implementing Project

Choosing national anthems to fit in this course was quite challenging. Out of three elements of music, melody and rhythm determine if the music is memorable or not. Some countries' national anthems were too long, the rhythms were complicated, and the melodies were not memorable. In

choosing, I considered national anthems with less complicated rhythms and memorable melodies. Using this criterion, I chose Nigerian and Ghanaian national anthems for this project. These national anthems also have the rhythmic patterns I had taught in ear training courses, which were prerequisites for MUSC 2022. Another criterion considered in the choice of national anthems was musical intervals. The musical interval refers to “the distance between two pitches” (Hollis, 1999). While any combination of notes besides each other in melody are possible, the melody with smaller musical intervals is easier to remember. The Nigerian and Ghanaian national anthems were also fit into this criterion.

A great deal of consideration was given to the creation of the rubric and assessment (Appendix A for details). The primary reason for introducing the music of other countries in this course was to expand the horizons of the students and to help establish in them a greater appreciation for the diversity in this world. Naturally, part of the assessment of a student’s performance would be determining if the student showed a sincere willingness to respect and learn about the other cultures from the course. There is, of course, no objective measure by which to tell if a student is accepting of another culture, so it took a considerable amount of time to formulate a rubric that was both fair to the students and mindful of the respective cultures studied. Ultimately, the final rubric was created using a combination of my past teaching experiences and my imagination to try to predict the spectrum of ways in which students would approach these course elements.

Another challenge was maintaining the distinctness of the course in the context of surrounding departmental curricula. When this course is internationalized, it becomes similar to World Music or Ethnic Music because of its activities and events. MUSC 2022 Ear Training and Sight Singing is distinguishable from these two courses in its strong participatory focus; students are required to take active part in the music, beating rhythms, singing, listening, and analyzing. As such, the course syllabus has been modified from its previous description to emphasize the international aspects of the course.

The additional component of “internationalizing” the curriculum gives students an innovative and unique method of developing their ears as tools to use in their musical pursuits. They learn the particular tones of

different countries and are able to compare and contrast the diverse rhythms of another culture from their own.

Conclusion

This course created an opportunity to learn about global situations through music and research, giving students a breadth of knowledge not typically found in a laboratory class. Through the process of participating in this project, I enjoyed learning about other countries much more than I expected. As I am Japanese, this project also gave me a chance to look back at my mother country and think about its history and culture once again.

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About the Author

Dr. Noda has been on the faculty of Albany State University (Albany, GA) since 2006. In addition to being an associate professor of piano, she teaches Japanese language classes for the ASU Foreign Language Institute. Her most recent internationalization effort includes the establishment of a new ASU Study Abroad Program with Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan beginning the summer 2017. She holds a Doctor of Music in Piano Performance, Chamber Music and Accompanying from The Florida State University College of Music; and holds a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance, Chamber Music and Accompanying from the University of Georgia. Her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Solo Performance was awarded by the Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo, Japan. She has studied with Evgeniy Rivkin and other well-known faculty, received several scholarships and awards including, the Director's Music Excellence Award, and was selected the winner of the annual The University of Georgia concerto competition. She is a member of the National Music Honor Society, Pi Kappa Lambda.

Appendix A

Rubric and Assessment

Anthems	Requirement	% Grade	Excellent	Good	Not Acceptable
National Anthems (100%)	Sing two countries' national anthems (the first stanza) by memory (Exam)	Melody (30 %)	The memorized singing is in tune, with correct beats and with fluency	The memorized singing is in tune with correct beats but not with fluency	The melody is incorrect, not memorized
		Rhythms (30 %)	The memorized singing is with correct rhythms and with fluency	The memorized singing is with correct rhythms but not with fluency	The rhythm is incorrect, not memorized
		Texts (30 %)	The memorized singing is with correct text and with fluency	The memorized singing is with correct text but not with fluency	The text is wrong, not memorized
		Volume & participation in singing (10%)	The memorized singing is done in appropriate volume and manner	The memorized singing is done in appropriate volume but not appropriate manner	The singing is done without confidence and volume
Japanese National Anthem Tune (50%)	Write own poem to fit the tune of the Japanese national anthem (<u>Homework</u>)	Syllable (30%)	Each syllable fits one note in the tune	The syllables sometimes don't fit the tune	The syllables don't fit the tune
		Message (10%)	The poem has a clear message	The poem has a message but not clear	The poem has no message

		Singing (10%)	The singing is smooth	The singing is awkward	The singing sometimes stops
Pentatonic Scales (50%)	Compose your own short composition using one of the four Japanese Pentatonic Scales (Homework)	Length (8 measures) (5%)	The composition has 8 measures and is well composed	The composition has 8 measures but is not well organized	The composition doesn't have 8 measures
		Pentatonic Scale (20%)	Chosen pentatonic scale is used correctly	Chosen pentatonic scale is used correctly, but has some wrong notes in it	Chosen pentatonic scale is not used correctly
		Singing own composition (20%)	The singing is smooth with correct notes and rhythm	The singing is smooth, but sometimes has wrong notes and rhythm	The singing is not smooth, and has wrong notes and rhythms
		Music writing (5%)	The entire composition is written correctly	The entire composition has some mistakes in writing	The entire composition is not written correctly

Appendix B

Syllabus

Albany State University
Albany, Georgia
Department of Music

MUSC 2022L: Ear Training and Sight Singing Lab
Holley Hall 205
Spring 2016
Dr. Mimi Noda

Course Description

This course is designed to develop aural skills through the study of melodies, rhythms, and harmonies. It is to be taken concurrently with corresponding theory courses.

Required Textbook

Ear Training: A Technique for Listening, seventh edition, Benward/Kolosick, Brown and Benchmark Publishers, 2000. ISBN 0 07 293675 4 \$80.49

Course Prerequisites

Students must have passed MUSC 1021, 1022, and 2021. This is a majors-only course.

Course Objectives

Throughout this course, students will gain an understanding of and develop the following skills:

1. To identify and write intervals and scales by ear.
2. To analyze harmonies by ear.
3. To hear and write melodies.
4. To hear and write rhythms.
5. To become fluent with sight singing.
6. To become familiar with rhythms from around the world
7. To become familiar with Asian Pentatonic Scales.
8. To be able to sing National Anthems of various countries.
9. To acquire international/intercultural knowledge and skills with regard to objectives 1-8 and incorporate it into one's own performance.

Course Grading Policy

Attendance/ <u>Class Participation</u>	30%
Homework	15%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	20%

Grading Scale

A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=0-59

Appendix C

Tentative Semester Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Others
Week 1	Jan. 11	Class meets / Review of MUSC 1022	Assignment: Melody 9D
Week 2	Jan. 18	Melody 9A, B	Jan. 18 (Mon.) Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Holiday
Week 3	Jan. 25	Harmony 9A / Rhythm 9A, B	
Week 4	Feb. 1	International Study (Brazilian Rhythms)	Assignment (TBA)
Week 5	Feb. 8	Melody 10A, B	Assignment: Melody 10D
Week 6	Feb. 15	Harmony 10A / Rhythm 10A, B	
Week 7	Feb. 22	International Study (National Anthems)	Assignment (TBA)
Week 8	Feb. 29	Melody 11A, B / Review for Midterm	Assignment: Melody 11D
Week 9	Mar. 7	Harmony 11A	<u>Midterm Exam Mar. 8 (Tue.)</u>
Week 10	Mar. 14	Spring Break	
Week 11	Mar. 21	Rhythm 11A, B	Assignment (TBA)
Week 12	Mar. 28	International Study / Pentatonic Scales	
Week 13	Apr. 4	Melody 12A, B	Assignment: Melody 12D
Week 14	Apr. 11	Harmony 12A / Rhythm 12A, B	
Week 15	Apr. 18	International Study (Guest Speakers)	Assignment (TBA)
Week 16	Apr. 25	International Study / Review for Final	
Week 16	May 2	Review for Final	<u>Final Exam May 5 (Tr.)</u>

¹ Lyrics are written in three languages: English, Hausa, and Yoruba